

THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1886

## KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE IN EARLY ARABIA

*Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia.* By W. Robertson Smith. (Cambridge: University Press, 1885.)

IT is almost, if not quite, an act of presumption to attempt to review Prof. Robertson Smith's book. The subject (the development of the family in early Arabia) is exceedingly obscure. The evidence is mainly drawn from books whose very names I never heard of before. In matters of Greek and Roman antiquities the evidence is handy, and may be estimated by one who only knows the usual classical tongues. In matters of early India, we have, at least, the German translations of the Veda and Mure's Sanskrit texts to help us, and Prof. Max Müller's English works, and all that Bergaigne, and Whitney, and Barth have written. But Prof. Robertson Smith's Arabian writers are wholly inaccessible to the ordinary anthropologist. He cannot presume to criticise the sources and testimonies, and I make no such pretension. One has to take the author's statements as he gives them, with the confidence inspired by his great renown as an Orientalist, and by the assent which, it is understood, other famous Eastern scholars give to his method and conclusions.

The thesis maintained by Prof. Robertson Smith is that in Arabia, as elsewhere, the Patriarchal family, where it existed, grew slowly out of a system, commonly called the *Matriarchate*, in which women were the acknowledged permanent element in the household. Such families are familiar to readers of Mr. McLennan's books, and Prof. Robertson Smith, on the whole, is chiefly occupied here in extending the sphere within which Mr. McLennan's opinions hold good. A period of promiscuity, or at least of brief informal unions, was succeeded by an age of polyandry, and consequent doubtfulness about male parentage in each case. This condition was gradually modified, for example, by brothers sharing the same wife, till the patriarchal family emerged from the confusion. Stocks of kindred were not so much gentes, like those of Rome, but totem kindreds, with relationship and the totem and family name descending through the woman, and, of course, with the exogamous prohibition against marriage between a man and woman of the same totem.

These, roughly, are the conditions whence, in early Arabia, Prof. Robertson Smith thinks that marriages and families with the husband and father for recognised centre were evolved. In many savage lands it is certain, in some civilised lands it is probable, that affairs have taken this course. But there is a very strong disposition to resist this conclusion among scholars who had it put before them rather late in life, when new ideas are distasteful. The existence of an older generation of doubters is most profitable to science. They exercise a constitutional check, and demand that proofs shall be very clear and unmistakable before they give up their old opinions. I do not expect Prof. Robertson Smith to make converts among the devotees of an original primæval patriarchal family. On the other hand, in my own case, he is "preaching to a proselyte." I am convinced that the

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order of development in which he believes has been very common if not universal. I think his theory colligates a great number of curious facts, and explains them at one stroke; whereas, if his theory is *not* accepted, I fail to see any one hypothesis, on the other side, that meets all the cases. These old survivals of customs will have to receive each its separate solution, or to be left unexplained as mere sports and curiosities. But, if Prof. Robertson Smith is right, they all fall into their proper strata, venerable fossils left by the tide of social progress, examples of laws known to have worked elsewhere to similar results. This appears to be an argument in favour of Prof. Robertson Smith's hypothesis.

When the Prophet started on his career, the unit of Arab society was the local group, feigned by genealogists to be a patriarchal tribe with a common ancestor. But the common ancestor's name often shows him to have been a fiction. "Many tribal names are plainly collectives." Some are plural animal names—Panthers, Dogs, Lizards—exactly such as we find in America, Africa, Australia, and India. Now, in these countries, the groups bearing such names are demonstrably *not* patriarchal, and demonstrably did grow up through exogamy and female kinship. If the similarly-named Arab tribes grew up differently, grew up on patriarchal lines and male kinship, the presence of beast names, like totem names, is a very curious coincidence. On the other view, Leopard, Wolf, Lizard was the name of the original or ideal ancestor. Now animal names as Christian names (so to speak) for individuals are common among savages. The personal name of a Red Indian whose totem and family name is "Crane," may be Wolf or Lizard. But as far as I know the *personal* name—the Christian name as it were—is always accompanied by an epithet, "Spotted Dog," "Sitting Bull," and the like, while the family or totem name is the beast, or plant, or another name *sans phrase*. For this reason I am disinclined to share Mr. C. J. Lyall's doubts (*Academy*, March 6, 1886). I think when an individual man has a personal name derived from a beast, it is a name with a qualification, as a rule. To a kindred calling themselves "Spotted Dogs," I would allow their claim to descend from a gentleman named "Spotted Dog," but a tribe called "Dogs" have a very totemistic air. However, so far, *there* is no certain demonstration. Arab tribes have many other names, divine or local, which cannot be derived from an actual ancestor. For these and similar reasons, Prof. Robertson Smith rejects the patriarchal origin of the several tribes, as conventionally given by genealogists. That explanation naturally occurred to men living in a state of male kindred, and the patriarchal family, but that explanation explains nothing. It does not, *e.g.*, explain tribes which refer their origin to a female eponym, an eponymous heroine. Nor does it explain why the Arab technical term for clan means "belly," just as, among aboriginal tribes of India, the native name for clan means "motherhood."

If we now examine marriage law, we find that by the prevalent type a woman goes to her husband's kin, and *her* children are reckoned of *his* blood, and take the side of *his* clan. But there are proofs that the opposite, the anti-patriarchal system, once existed. The man went to the woman's people (either permanently or on visits), and *his* children were reckoned to *her* blood, and took the

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side of *her* clan. Even now, among the Bedouins, a woman, it seems, rarely leaves her tribe, but strangers readily marry and settle in the tribe of their brides.

In the fourteenth century, a wife of the women of Zebia would never follow a stranger husband, and she kept the children. The women of the Jāhilya had the right to dismiss their husband, *the tent was theirs*. Ammianus mentions the gift of the wife to the bridegroom, a spear and a tent, he dwelt in *her* tent, and followed her people to the washing of spears. All this means *beena* marriage, as it is called in Ceylon. In marriages by capture, necessarily, the opposite rule prevailed. A woman went with the husband to his people, he is her lord, or *ba'al*, and thus *ba'al* marriage is the reverse of *beena* marriage. Purchase of wives naturally produced marriages of a *ba'al* type. As the two latter forms of marriage prevailed, women lost that independence in the wedded condition which they had enjoyed under *beena* marriage, thanks to the kindred of their own blood who surrounded them. Prof. Robertson Smith goes on to show the existence of various shapes of polyandry in early Arabia; there were "small sub-groups having property and wives in common as in Tibetan polyandry." In short, at the Prophet's time, the Arabs had already the orthodox family system with a paterfamilias, but previously there had been a system with a materfamilias, the house and children were hers, succession was through mothers, and the husband came to the wife, not the wife to the husband. The end of the book (Chapters VII. and VIII.) deals with traces and survivals of totemism. A list of tribal names derived from animals is given: the evidence that the animals were totems, worshipful, and not to be slain or eaten, is, naturally, scanty. In fact, though the analogies strongly point to the existence of totemism at a remote period in Arabia, I do not think the evidence will have much effect on the minds of the people who dismiss totems with the remark that they should be spelled *otes* or *olems*. A note (2, p. 221, see p. 304) is more to the point and more convincing. This note is of great religious interest and importance.

The tendency of the book, on the whole, is to show that among the Semitic races, as among Red, Black, and Yellow men, the matriarchal preceded the patriarchal family, and the totem kindred preceded the *gens*. That is precisely what one believes, but it is not in this generation that the doctrine will be universally accepted. In the case of Arabia proof is peculiarly difficult, as the reforms of the Prophet did so much to veil the remains of earlier religion and custom. It would be superfluous to praise a book so learned and masterly as Prof. Robertson Smith's; it is enough to say that no student of early history can afford to be without "Kinship in Early Arabia."

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#### FIELD'S CHROMATOGRAPHY

*Field's Chromatography; a Treatise on Colours and Pigments, for the Use of Artists.* Modernised by J. Scott Taylor, B.A. (London: Winsor and Newton, 1885.)

*The Artists' Manual of Pigments.* By H. C. Standage. (London: Crosby Lockwood and Co., 1886.)

THE new edition of "Field's Chromatography" differs in two important particulars from the previous issues of this well-known treatise. Firstly, one-third of the

volume is devoted to a discussion of such parts of the modern theory of chromatics as bear upon the practice of the painter; secondly, a large number of useless or disused pigments and of substances suggested for use as pigments have been excluded from the pages before us. In accuracy and compactness this hand-book has undoubtedly been much improved, but it affords the student very little information upon two of the most important aspects in which artists should study their paints—those, namely, of purity and permanence. For instance, we are informed on p. 72 that "the artist will be told all that is known, outside manufacturing circles, of the constitution of his pigments." How is this promise redeemed? We turn to the description of white lead (pp. 97–101);—not a word can we find as to the presence in it of intentional adulterants or of such a frequent and injurious impurity as lead subacetate. We search in the same way and with the same result for some of the most rudimentary scraps of information as to the chemical characters and tests for the purity of vermilion, cadmium yellow, and artificial ultramarine. Then too we find statements as to individual pigments which are positively incorrect. It is not strictly true that the Naples yellow now sold is an imitation of the original pigment. One London house sells the original pigment—an antimoniate of lead, another supplies an equally good paint in which some oxide of zinc is associated with the antimoniate; neither preparation is an "imitation," made, say, with cadmium yellow and zinc white, and falsely called "Naples yellow." The question of permanence is not adequately discussed in this volume. We want numerical values representing the degrees of change suffered by those pigments with which the artist cannot dispense but which are known to alter under exposure. For example, it is misleading to call brown madder "very permanent" (p. 155): let any one try the effect of an exposure to a single summer's sunshine of a wash of this paint on a sheet of pure white paper. The same criticism applies to the statement (on p. 115) that the madder lakes are "not liable to change by the action of light." Certainly they cannot be termed fugitive in the same sense as the cochineal lakes, but they are by no means permanent. The editor of "Field's Chromatography" should have given more attention to gradations in the amount and nature of the colour-changes suffered by comparable pigments. In the tables of pigments in the appendix (pp. 171–185) no distinction is made between pigments used as oil-colours and those employed in water-colour drawings, although it is notorious that the medium has a marked effect upon the degree of stability shown by many pigments. And we altogether object to the accuracy of Table IV. (p. 176). Several of the pigments named in that list are entirely unaffected "by admixture with ochres and other ferruginous substances" instead of being "decomposed" by them as there stated.

The second work on our list has very slight claims on our attention. Mr. Standage's "Manual of Pigments" is stated on its title-page to show the composition of pigments, their degrees of permanency, their adulterations, and their mutual action; it also offers "the most reliable tests of purity." But when we examine into the chemical details given under the heads of the individual pigments we find that this compilation teems with the most ludicrous blunders. We proceed to cite a few of these, which need